

September 20, 2013

TO: Members of the Bloomington Township Board

FROM: Lillian Henegar, Bloomington Township Trustee

RE: FINDINGS IN RESPONSE TO THE PROTEST OF THE 2014 BLOOMINGTON TOWNSHIP BUDGET

The township board and township trustee acknowledge receipt of a petition of protest to the Bloomington Township 2014 Budget. The group protests the salary increases for staff in the Township Office. They are also protesting the Township's fire contracts with Washington and Benton Townships.

The 2014 budget was built to fit within the allowed 2014 maximum levy limits for township and fire. It is important to note, as it was at the September 5 2013 Bloomington Township Board Meeting when the subject was raised, that the levies for the fire and the township funds are by law separate. Therefore, any savings realized from reducing township raises could not be distributed into the Fire Fund for firefighter salaries or other fire and emergency service purposes.

TOWNSHIP TRUSTEE AND TOWNSHIP DEPUTY TRUSTEE

The salary increases for Trustee and Deputy Trustee were made to bring these salaries in line with comparable positions in other townships in Monroe County. For example, Van Buren's Trustee's 2013 salary is \$44,900 while the Bloomington Township Trustee receives \$40,185. In 2013, the Perry Township's Deputy Trustee receives \$47,362 while Bloomington's Deputy Trustee receives \$36,400.

Despite being an elected position, it seemed appropriate to budget for a salary sufficient to attract a qualified manager. The Bloomington Township Trustee oversees a \$2 million budget and 15 paid full-time and 17 part-time employees, plus more than 25 volunteer firefighters. The Trustee is responsible for two fire stations and the apparatus and training necessary for optimum fire, emergency medical services, and hazardous materials response. In addition the Township property includes an emergency shelter for homeless families and its office building.

Bloomington Township's Deputy Trustee serves as its Office Manager. This person is charged with the day to day operations including payroll, human resources, insurance needs of the staff (including firefighters), office, and property, and accounts management. The Township has been lucky in finding qualified persons to hold this position who are also dedicated to township government's mission. However, the budget for this position should reflect the competitive market for persons qualified to hold it.

For 2014, even with the increases to these salaries (\$44,898 and \$41,600) we were able to readjust our staffing through attrition and shifting responsibilities so that the personal services line of the General Fund is reduced by \$5,900 from 2013.

TOWNSHIP ASSISTANCE

In the Township General Fund and the Township Assistance Fund, the township budgeted to make township salaries comparable to other townships in the County.

The year's township assistance workload is on track to reach about 560 households a year. The Township Assistance staff work with township residents who come to our office for emergency assistance with rent, utilities, or medical needs. Often our residents' mental health or developmental disabilities hinder their ability to manage their limited resources. The Township's staff help ensure that they can access the services they need. Whether approving or denying a request for assistance, the Township staff looks for ways to help the applicant beyond a rent check.

In 2014, the senior caseworker returns to 40 hours (\$41,010) and the other caseworker's salary (\$28,860 for 30 hours) is brought up to parity with the lowest paid Perry Township caseworker. Caseworker salaries in Perry Township range from \$46,000 to \$33,900. (The caseworkers or "investigators" salaries come out of the Township Assistance Fund.)

The senior caseworker's workday is 8 am to 4 pm. The current 4 day schedule does not serve the Township residents effectively – limiting her time in the office to handle cases as well as collaborating with others inside and outside the office to improve service to the community. Thus, the decision was made to return her to a 40 hour week.

The protesters have based their protest of Township Office salaries on the Office's posted hours (Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm and 1:00pm to 4:00pm). Township Office hours are comparable to other townships. The Township staff work 7 to 8 hours a day for the Township. The Office is closed from noon to 1 pm in order to allow staff uninterrupted time to work on cases and other responsibilities as well as to eat lunch. Even when the doors are closed, staff is working for the Township.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN BUDGETING FOR SALARIES

Careful research and consideration is given to personal salaries. The Township and its residents are dependent upon the quality and commitment of the staff, whether in the office working with people, with all sorts of challenges and disabilities, seeking assistance to ensuring that when one of us dials 911 trained professional firefighters respond.

In addition to looking at salaries in comparable townships, we investigate other sources of data. US Census website reports the median salary in Indiana for the period 2007-2011 was \$48,393. According to STATS Indiana (IU Business Research Center), the 2011 median household income in Indiana was \$46,410. The average wage per job in the finance and insurance industry in Monroe County was \$44,953 and for health care and social service jobs the average was \$39,700. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the mean wage for firefighters in Bloomington is \$41,540 in 2012 and nationally it is \$48,550.

The 2014 Township Fire Fund Budget provides for 2% increases to firefighter salaries along with continuing an annual stipend. The Township's firefighters will receive, before overtime, an average annual salary of \$50,000, or \$18.15 an hour. For comparison, the Van Buren Township firefighters receive on average approximately \$17.00/hour.

FIRE CONTRACTS WITH BENTON AND WASHINGTON TOWNSHIPS

The Washington and Benton Township fire contracts allow us to help ensure the residents of those townships receive adequate fire and emergency services while enabling the Township to retain 3 paid career firefighters on every shift, and ensuring the quality of service for all three townships.

The petitioners cited numbers for calls for service in Bloomington Township, which were not accurate. Runs in Bloomington Township were 548 for 2012, including 59 mutual aid runs to the City.

Each year, the township board and the trustee consider carefully what would be a reasonable increase. We not only look at our cost per run but also at their recent certified fire fund budgets. The Township evaluates the rate of increase versus the potential loss of a contract. The Township has been steadily increasing the amounts of these contracts over the past several years – the overall increases in the contract amounts from 2007 to 2014 are \$41,400 for Benton and \$46,300 for Washington.

Even though Washington and Benton Townships do not pay the full cost of the service they receive from Bloomington Township's Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Bloomington Township's fire department benefits from these contracts. The Township is committed to having 3 career firefighters on every shift and safe up-to-date equipment and training. The revenue, \$170,600, makes this possible. Major expenses such as personnel and capital outlays would be the same regardless of the contracts with other townships. The revenue from the contracts ensures we can provide a critical, albeit expensive, service to the three townships.